

Group therapy helps

Compulsive overeaters fight craving for food

By LINDA TAYLOR

She was a heavy child, weighing 200 pounds at high school graduation. For her wedding, she shrunk down to a flattering 137 pounds, now she's back to 210. Her heaviest had been 275.

She buys two bags of cookies and hides one bag in the laundry room so she can eat it when her family isn't watching.

Finally, at age 40, she realizes her problem — compulsive overeating — and has joined a group

called Overeaters Anonymous (O.A.).

According to Ruth, organizer of the Orchard Lake group of O.A., the woman realized she is not alone. Others share her problem of compulsive overeating and through a type of group therapy, she is coming to grips with her love affair with food.

THE GROUP, which strictly enforces anonymity of its membership — only first names are used — was founded about 15 years ago in California. Ruth read about it in a newspaper, sent for information and started attending meetings — held in Allen Park. She finally founded a group of her own in Orchard Lake last fall.

It now meets from 9:30 to 11 a.m. every Thursday at Orchard

Lake Community Church.

According to the group's preamble, "Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women (although mostly women attend) who meet to share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from the self destruction of compulsive overeating."

The only requirement for attending, according to Ruth, is a desire to stop eating compulsively and to effect a change in eating habits. There are no dues or fees and the group is self-supporting through its own contributions.

WHILE THE GROUP is not allied with any religious sect — it meets in a church because of its location — the 12 steps which mem-

bers follow do have a spiritual overtone.

Step III of a prescribed plan, for example, states that, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

Ruth, an Orchard Lake resident, explained that the group is spiritual, not religious. Members can believe in anything — love or "the door knob" — as their higher power, as long as they believe in something.

"Once you're in the group," she continued, "your personality changes and it becomes a spiritual experience."

The organization parallels Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) in purpose and structure. According to Ruth, many ex-alcoholics turn to "getting drunk on food."

UNLIKE OTHER weight-loss organizations, she said, members are not required to reveal their weight. In fact, she said, weight loss is not stressed; a change in personality is stressed.

"You can't get weight off unless you change your attitude," said Ruth. "You can't force it on people."

Like A.A., O.A. relies on a sponsor method of communication and assistance. The member calls his sponsor daily to report his meal plans. The sponsor neither approves or disapproves but merely listens "to help keep the member honest."

The sponsor also listens to problems.

Between calls, members use different gimmicks to keep their minds off food. One woman, Ruth

said, chews sugarless gum, sometimes an entire pack at a time. Another works in the kitchen, preparing food for her six children, with tape over her mouth. Another relies on perfume, which she sniffs constantly.

But according to Ruth, who has been overweight most of her life, compulsive overeating is a symptom of an underlying problem.

"We eat because of what's eating us."

And some women, after losing weight, become more aware of things in their life. They, she said, often see how they've "been a doormat" for their husbands and families. They begin to start thinking for themselves as they regain self respect. "We realize we are not human garbage disposals."

Fashion workshop planned

Bea Hutton, a consultant of Fashion Critique of Birmingham, will conduct a workshop in wardrobe planning, accessorizing and using what you already have in your closet at the 1 p.m. meeting Tuesday of the Auxiliary to the Salvation Army.

The meeting will be held at Evedale Residence, 2643 Park Ave., Detroit. A board meeting will be held at 11 a.m.

A tea will follow.

Diabetes classes offered

A second series of diabetes classes offered by the Oakland County Health Department will take place from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. from Wednesday, Jan. 15 to Wednesday, Feb. 12.

The free classes, held weekly for five weeks, will be held at the South Oakland Health Center, 2725 Greenfield Road at Eleven and One-Half Mile Road, Southfield.

Call the education office of the health department to register.

The classes are taught by public health nurses and a nutritionist. Topics include the nature of the disease, dietary management and medications and suggestions for coping with everyday problems.

Those attending must have diabetes or have a family member who has the disease and be under the care of a doctor.

A written statement from the doctor is required for attending and can be presented at the first class.

Classes are limited to 20 persons.

Red Magen David has funds meeting

The Women's Committee of the Michigan Region, American Red Magen David for Israel, will hold their first general fund raising meeting for 1975 at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 16 at the home of Mrs. Allen Seel, 30620 Nadara, Southfield.

The theme for this year's fund raiser, scheduled for Saturday, April 26 at Beth Abraham Hillel Synagogue, is "Old New York."

Rick May and his band will provide music for dancing, and games and a silent auction are planned.

Mrs. Seel and Mrs. Larry Edelheit are co-chairmen of the event.

Mrs. Harvey Beck and Mrs. Carl Cohen are auction co-chairmen.

Games and decorations are being planned by Mrs. Sheldon Mintz and Mrs. Irwin Edelman.

Mrs. Allen Warmack will be in charge of tickets and publicity is by Mrs. Donald Sherman.

Proceeds of the annual event will go to the Col. Marcus Hood Reformation Institute, in Jaffa, Israel.

Open auditions 'Lion in Winter'

Lathrup Village Players will hold open auditions Jan. 9 and 10 for its upcoming production of James Goldman's "The Lion in Winter."

Auditions are scheduled for 8 p.m. at the Lathrup Village Community Building, 18880 Southfield Road.

Everyone interested in theater work is welcome. Off-stage production positions as well as acting opportunities are available.

For information contact President Joel Weaver.

"The Lion in Winter" captures the intensity of passions and politics during the turbulent reign of England's King Henry II and his queen, Eleanor.

It will be produced at Groves High School's Little Theater in Birmingham on March 6, 7 and 8.



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